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ABSTRACT

Part of an international series of amply illustrated, colorful, small size books for children ages 5 to 10, this volume describes the pioneers westward movement across the United States; relates the experiences of crossing the Great Plains; and talks about the jobs that grew out of the experiences: trappers, cowboys, and prospectors. Brief biographies of men like Buffalo Bill Cody are given and a discussion of what life was like after 1830 is presented. (NL)

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Cowboys and Pioneers

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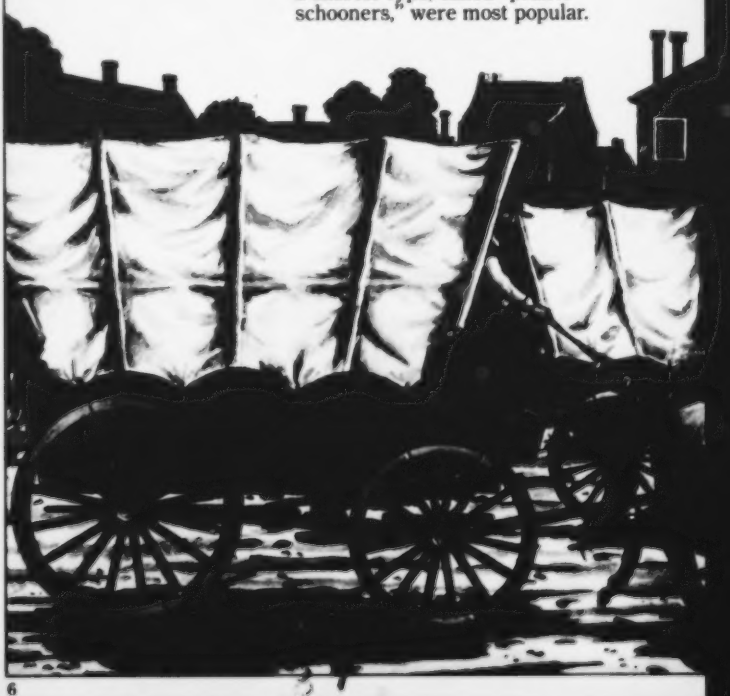
Going West: Cowboys and Pioneers

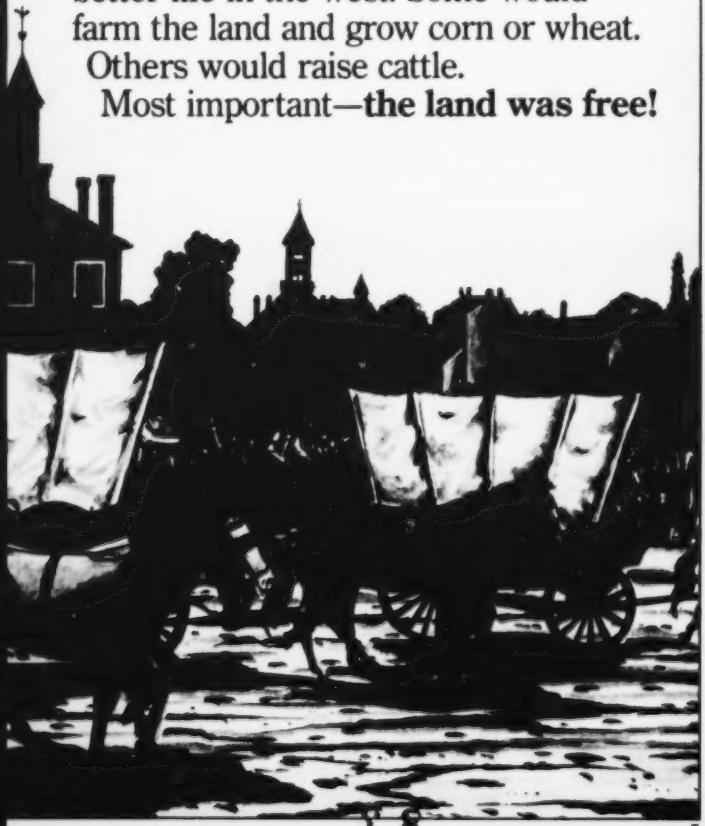
Westward ho!
The date: May, 1830
The place: Independence, Missouri. When the leader gave the signal, whole families started off in caravans of sturdy, canvas-covered wagons pulled by horses or oxen. This is the beginning of a new life.

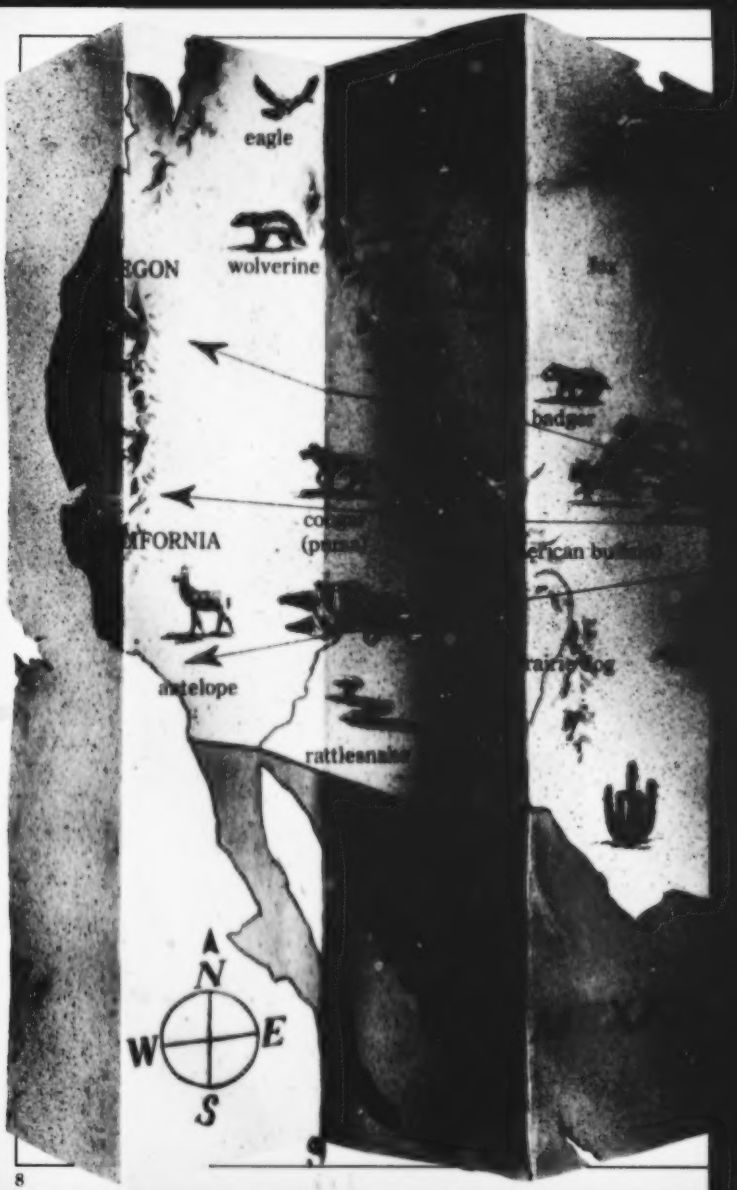
The early wagons were Conestogas, in use since colonial days. Later a shorter type, called "prairie schooners," were most popular.



They were pioneers, the first people to push westward into the frontier. Their journey could last five or six months, leading them through vast plains and over the Rocky Mountains. It was a hard and dangerous trip, but the pioneers hoped to find a better life in the west. Some would farm the land and grow corn or wheat. Others would raise cattle.

Most important—**the land was free!**

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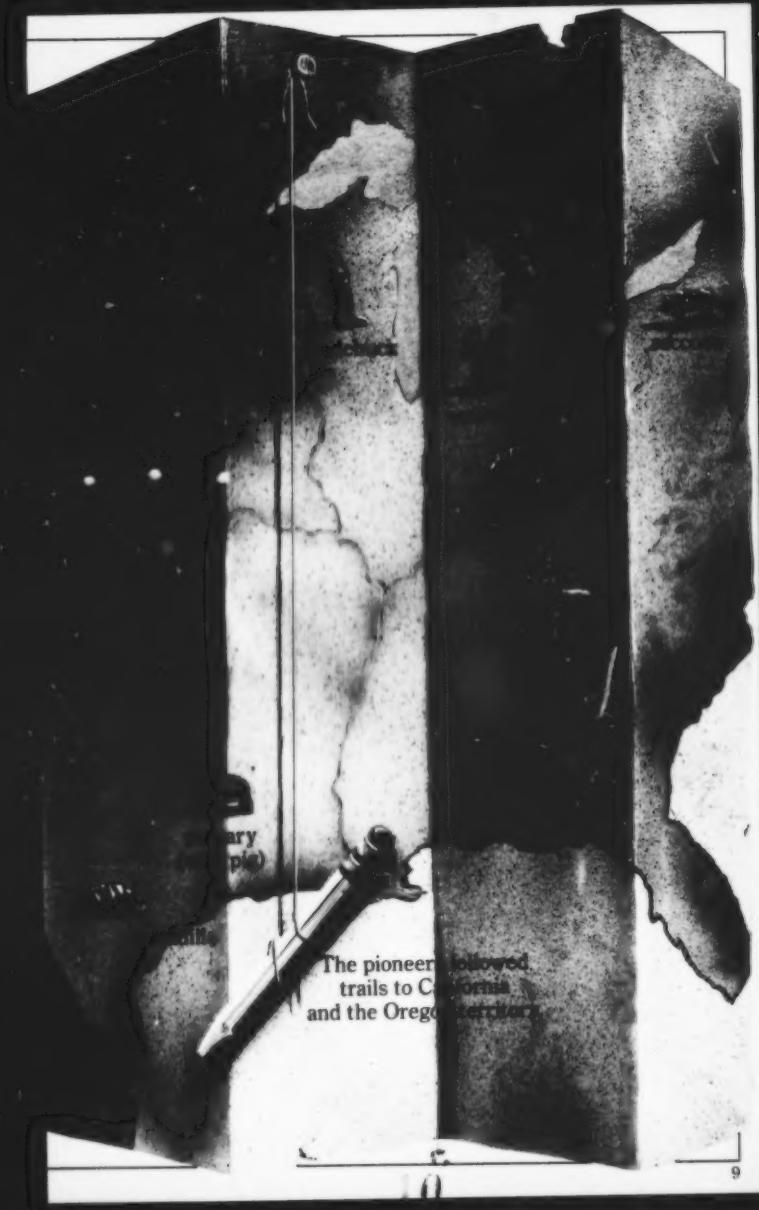
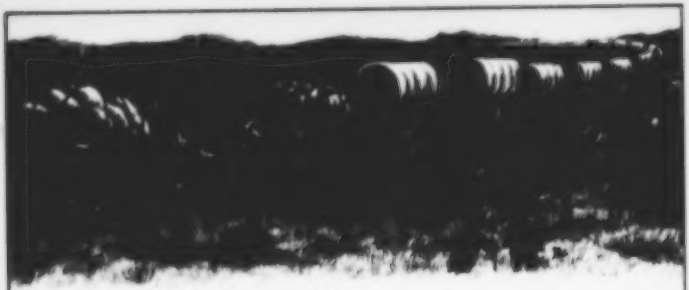


The pioneers followed
trails to California
and the Oregon Territory.

It took a long time to get ready. The pioneers had to take many things because there were no stores along the trail. Barrels of food were piled in the wagon: bacon and beans, dried fruit. Cornmeal and sugar. Coffee and tea. Pepper and ginger.

A large trunk held wool shirts and trousers for the men, wool-and-linen dresses for the women. The family sold furniture or gave it away to friends, but usually took the rocking chair along! The butter churn and the candle molds would come in handy. So would the ax, saw, shovel and pick. A rifle was needed for hunting.



The prairie stretched as far as the eye could see. Often there was not a single tree, just buffalo grass.

Crossing the Platte River was tricky when its waters rose. Some wagons had removable wheels so they could float across the river like rafts.

In the Rockies, a blizzard could halt the wagons. The temperature sometimes dipped to 40° below.

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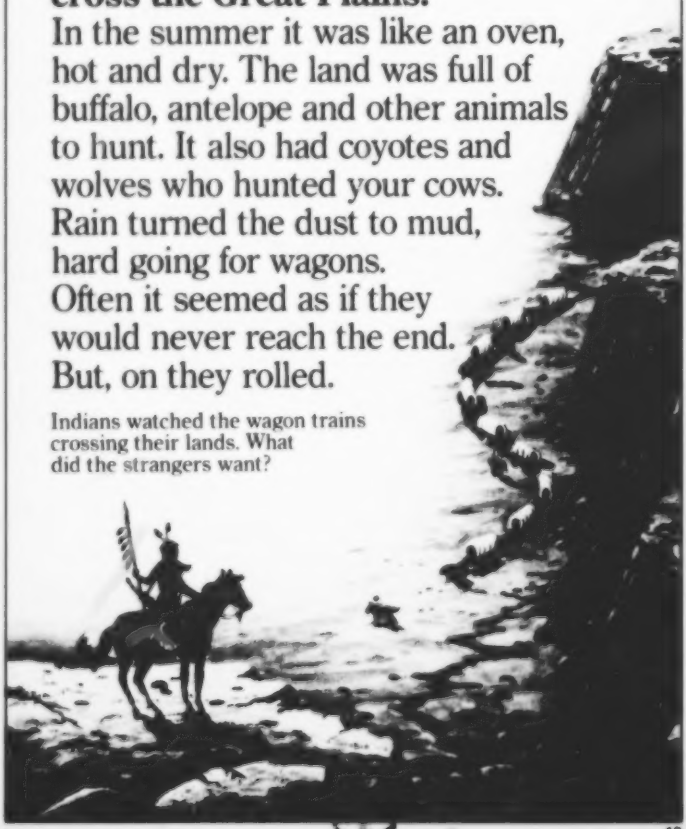
Men, called scouts, who knew the trails, rode ahead. They watched for Indians and picked the easiest path. Horses and oxen were precious to the pioneers. You could lose them to Indians or to an accident on the trail.

It took two long months to cross the Great Plains.

In the summer it was like an oven, hot and dry. The land was full of buffalo, antelope and other animals to hunt. It also had coyotes and wolves who hunted your cows. Rain turned the dust to mud, hard going for wagons. Often it seemed as if they would never reach the end. But, on they rolled.

Indians watched the wagon trains crossing their lands. What did the strangers want?



At sunset, the wagons stopped. It had been a good day. They had covered almost twenty miles. A group of Indians came to talk. The leader of the wagon train gave them tobacco and some colored ribbons. Music would be played.

The wagons were formed in a tight circle for protection. Children gathered dried buffalo manure, called chips, for the fires. Women cooked stew and baked cornbread. After supper the pioneers told stories and joked. Some read the bible. Sleep came easily after a day of walking. Guards kept watch. A coyote's howl was heard.

A game of wrestling.

Oregon at last!

Large rocks had to be moved.

There were forests full of deer, grizzly bears and wolverines. Salmon and trout swam in crystal clear streams. With the help of their neighbors, each family quickly built a log cabin before winter came. Wooden planks were used for the roof. The cabin had only one window, covered with a piece of oiled paper or a greased deerskin. The children gathered moss to stuff mattresses. When their shoes and clothing wore out, the pioneers made new ones from deerskin. Sometimes they cut pieces from the old wagon's canvas cover. There was a lot to be done!

Plowing the fields

Husking corn

Washing clothes

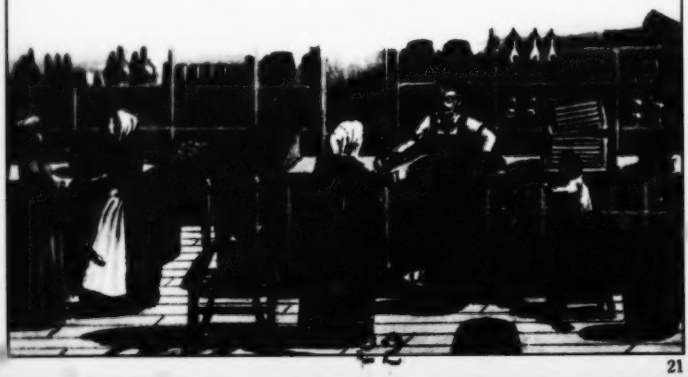
Oregon City was one of the first towns to be built. Going there to shop was a real event for the new settlers.

On Sunday, they went to church.
Some walked for hours
to get there. They met
friends and praised God.

The **blacksmith** was an important person in town. He made shoes for horses and nails for building. If your plow was broken, he could fix it. His hammer rang like a bell and sparks flew.
At the **saloon** men played cards and passed on the latest news. What was happening "back East" in the states they came from?

Sometimes, all seemed calm at the **sheriff's** office. But he often spent a night in the saddle. Chasing a dangerous outlaw could take him a hundred miles.

At the **general store**, you could find almost anything! Women brought corn, wheat, eggs and vegetables from their farms. They traded for needles and ribbon; pots and pans. They needed sugar and coffee and, maybe, a treat for the children, hard candy.



Once a year, in the spring, ranchers hired extra cowboys. This was for the "round up." The cattle and newborn calves were brought to a central spot. Red-hot irons were used to put the ranch's mark on the calves. Then they formed herds of a thousand or more, driving them north to the railroad lines. Dodge City and Abilene in Kansas were famous as **cow towns.**

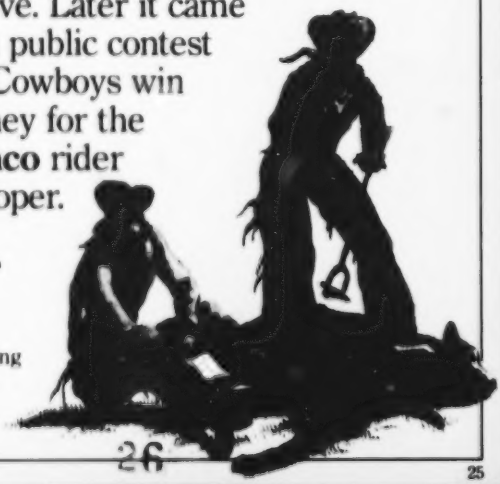
Lassos were not simple ropes. They were made of sturdy braided leather.

Driving a herd of cattle was hard work... long hours chasing strays and pushing the slow ones along. At night cowboys took turns guarding the herd. There were many dangers: wolves, storms, and especially, **rustlers**. These were gangs of thieves who stole cattle. At the cow town the cattle were sold for the best price. Then they were loaded on trains and sent to the East.

Cowboys wore wide-brimmed hats to protect them from the rain and sun. A bandanna, worn around the neck, could be pulled up to keep dust off their faces.

Leather **chaps** over their pants protected them from brambles. Thick gloves and boots were needed. **Cowboys wore these same clothes, day after day!** The horses they rode usually belonged to the ranch. Their guns might be their only possessions.

What is a **rodeo?**
It is a Spanish word which first meant "round-up" before the long spring drive. Later it came to mean a public contest or sport. Cowboys win prize money for the best **bronco** rider and calf-roper.



Riding a bronco in a corral for livestock.

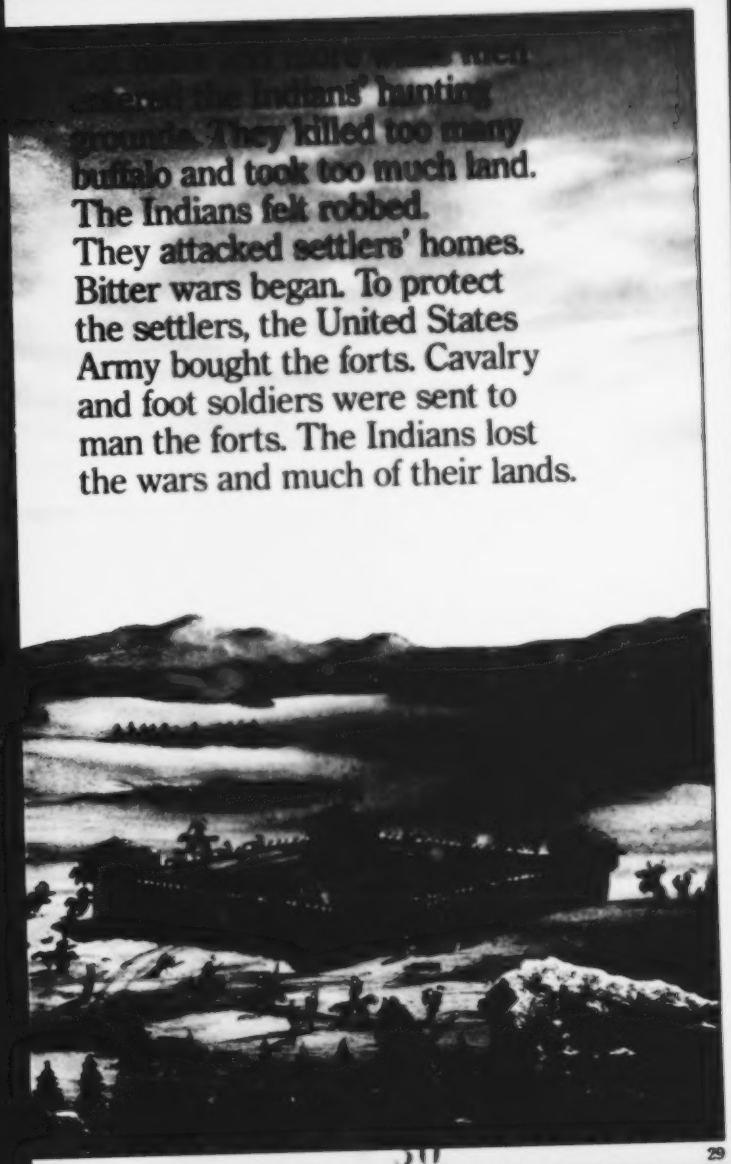
Cowboys marking cattle with the ranch's brand.

Fur trappers were called Mountain Men.
Animal furs were valuable. Trappers set off to hunt for many months in the Rockies. They brought back raccoon, muskrat and, especially, beaver pelts (the fur and skin). Every gentleman in the cities wanted a beaver hat to wear.

At sundown, a trapper, dressed in deerskin, sets a trap by a beaver lodge.

The trapper often befriended Indians, and sometimes married an Indian woman.
During the winter, he and his wife cleaned, stretched, and dried the skins on the walls of their cabin.
Then he would bring his furs, tied in bundles, to merchants from large companies. He traded them for more traps, gunpowder, bullets and tobacco.
Mountain men were often the first white men to see places like Great Salt Lake and Yosemite.

At the start of the westward movement, these large buildings were used as trading posts. An Indian could trade beaver pelts and buffalo hides. He got steel knives, iron pots, mirrors and other useful goods.

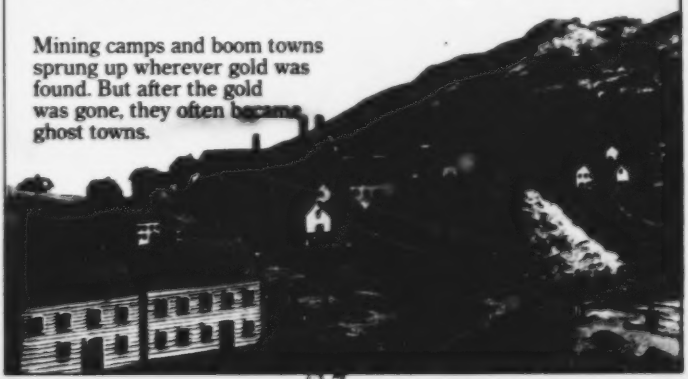


They killed too many buffalo and took too much land. The Indians felt robbed. They attacked settlers' homes. Bitter wars began. To protect the settlers, the United States Army bought the forts. Cavalry and foot soldiers were sent to man the forts. The Indians lost the wars and much of their lands.

Prospectors wash pans of sand to sift out flakes or nuggets of gold.

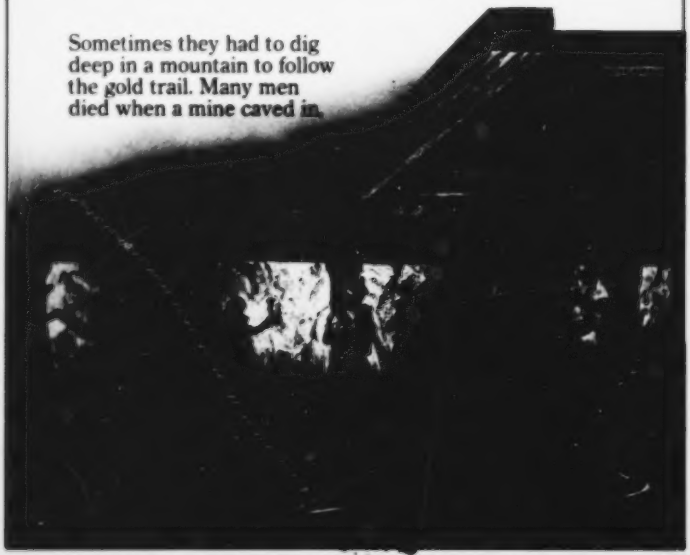
Gold in California and the Rockies!

In 1848 gold and silver ore was discovered in California, at a place called Sutter's Mill. Many cowboys and settlers left their jobs to become **prospectors**. Men from all over the world joined **the gold rush**. All it took was a shovel and pick, a pan and luck.



Mining camps and boom towns sprung up wherever gold was found. But after the gold was gone, they often became ghost towns.

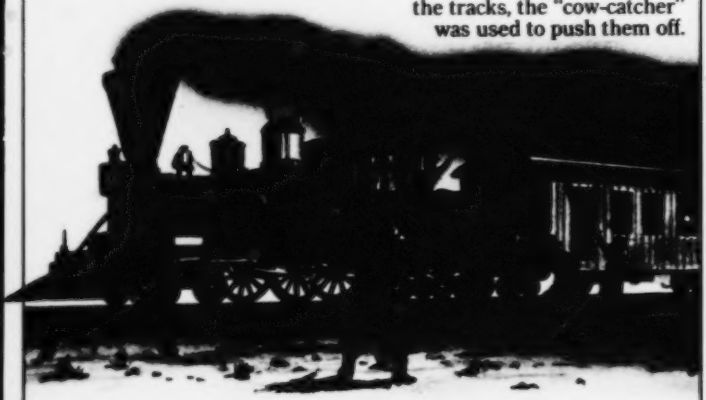
A prospector worked a **claim**, a piece of land on which only he could dig. A law protected his rights from "claim jumpers." By panning in a stream, or using a special box, he washed out the soft earth, leaving heavier gold. A rich claim was called a **strike**. A prospector might work with two or three companions. They had a hard life, away from wives and children. Their dream was to "strike it rich." Then they could go home like kings.



Sometimes they had to dig deep in a mountain to follow the gold trail. Many men died when a mine caved in.

Freight companies were started once the West was well-populated. Teams of horses pulled the stage-coaches of Wells, Fargo. They carried mail, packages and passengers. At night they stopped at stations to sleep and eat. From Missouri to California it was an uncomfortable 25-day trip.

But it had taken the pioneers up to six months to travel the same distance!
In 1860 the **Pony Express** began. Young men, riding fast horses,



Sometimes a train was stopped by outlaws. When buffalo got on the tracks, the "cow-catcher" was used to push them off.

carried pouches of mail. Jumping from one horse to the next, they rode up to 75 miles without stop. The charge for a letter was ten dollars in gold!
This famous service was ended with the building of **telegraph lines** across the land. A message could be sent by electric wires.
In 1869 another great work was completed, a railroad to the West.

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Buffalo Bill
His real name was William F. Cody. He got his nickname as a top hunter of buffalo (meat for the railroad workers). As a young man he was a Pony Express rider and scout. Later he owned a Wild West show which toured the world.

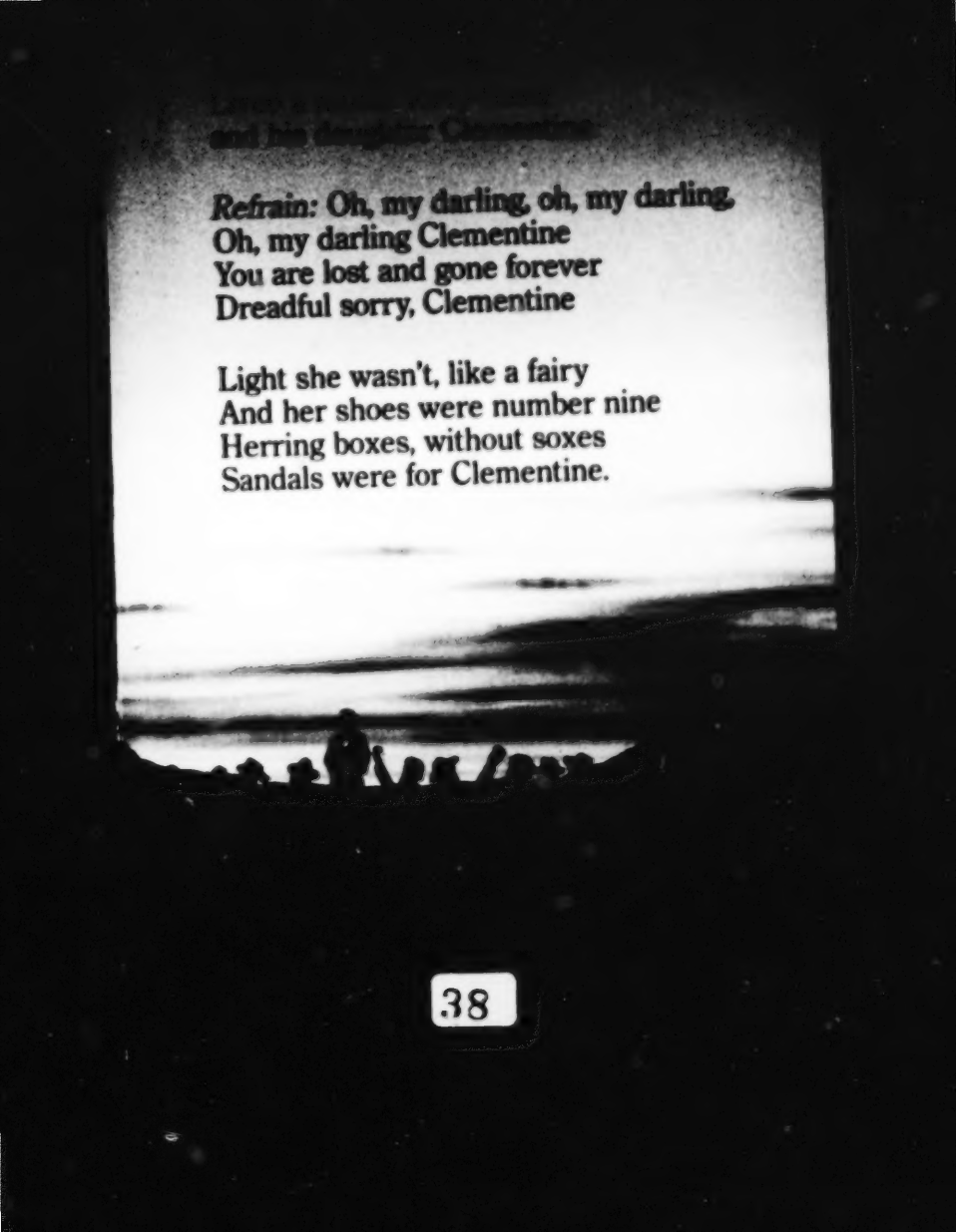
James Butler Hickok
"Wild Bill" Hickok, a famous army scout, stage driver and lawman. He ruled tough towns like Abilene and Hays City with an iron hand. An expert shot, Wild Bill killed many outlaws. He was shot in the back and died in the Dakotas.

Do you know the story of Davy Crockett? He was one of the first pioneers. We still hear about his bear hunting and his coonskin cap. He died in a famous battle at the Alamo in Texas. Like Davy, many people wanted to see what was "over the next hill." The West was tamed and settled by men and women like that.

Calamity Jane

Martha Canary, known as Calamity Jane, often dressed like a man. She did men's jobs, like Indian scout and freight wagon driver. And she could use that rifle she carried! Calamity was in Hays City in the same years as Wild Bill Hickok. One story is that they were sweethearts.

1. In a cav- ern, in a can- yon, Ex- ca-
Refrain Oh my dar- ling, oh my dar- ling, oh my
-va- ting for a mine Dwelt a mi- ner, for- ty-
dar- ling Cle- men- tine! Thou art lost and go- ne
-ni- ner, And his daugh- ter Cle- men- tine.
for ever, Dread — ful sorry Cle- men- tine.


and his daughter Clementine.
Refrain: Oh, my darling, oh, my darling,
Oh, my darling Clementine
You are lost and gone forever
Dreadful sorry, Clementine
Light she wasn't, like a fairy
And her shoes were number nine
Herring boxes, without soxes
Sandals were for Clementine.
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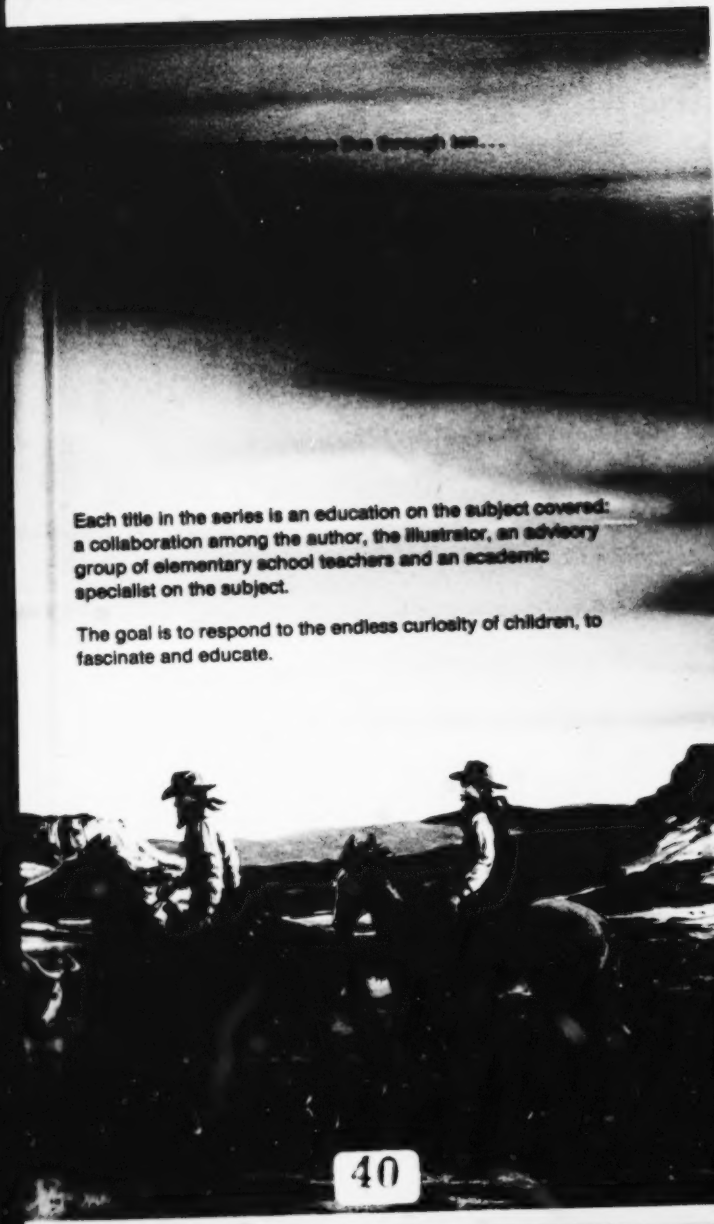

Each title in the series is an education on the subject covered: a collaboration among the author, the illustrator, an advisory group of elementary school teachers and an academic specialist on the subject.

The goal is to respond to the endless curiosity of children, to fascinate and educate.

Going West: Cowboys and Pioneers,
illustrated by Donald Grant,
is No. 21 in a series of books of
discovery for children five years
old and upwards.

- **What adventures did pioneers have?**
- **What did they bring with them in their wagons?**

- **What did families do when they arrived in the West?**
- **Did trappers get along with the Indians?**
- **Who were the prospectors?**

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